

Unstable places

Revisiting ideas experimented with in 2013–2015, the works presented by Pollyanna Freire in the exhibition *Vão* [span] are based on delicate colourful profiles, made of metal, whose visual results approximate to drawings that affirm themselves in the third dimension.

Although inscribed on two-dimensional surfaces, the lines of a drawing can, as we well know, simulate a third dimension by using a set of representational conventions. Freire's sculptures are created from modular elements, in non-standardised sizes, that simulate lines (or edges) joined together in apparently free combinations, the product of a game in each case of – never repeating – possibilities. The result is a set of forms that are impossible to materialise spatially: the absence of closed planes prevents the creation of true containers, each artwork being a figure that remains open, disarranged, incomplete, unfinished...

The works, therefore, compete for affirmation in multiple fields: primarily that of sculpture, but also that of drawing. However, the strongest contribution to the semantic complexity of the works is introduced by the illusion of the gesture that each sculpture appears to encompass: the works are bound together spatially, acquire an almost kinetic movement and are visually perceived as if we were seeing them being drawn in space. Evident in the successive references to which each of the mentioned facets of Freire's work leads us is the powerful tradition of Brazilian Concrete and Neo-Concrete sculpture, which the artist subjects to subtle deviations and handles with special formal and chromatic delicacy.

Within the strict field of sculpture, Freire's works can be small or medium in size, or also examples of public sculpture, at which point the discussion revolves around issues of size and scale, production and reproduction.

Initially, the artist's work was predominantly wall mounted; however, the works in this exhibition are almost all floor pieces. In moving from the wall to the floor, the sculptures have gained size and physical presence without losing their aforesaid relationship to drawing, reinforcing the illusion of the gesture that creates them in the space. But among the various forms elaborated, the same logic of scale is maintained that almost always allows us to assume that a piece could be enlarged or reduced without fearing that it might, as a result, lose its original aesthetic qualities. In other words, each final piece can always be regarded as a model or maquette of another, in a process of continuous creation of forms.

Elasticity, or the ability to create artworks capable of resolving themselves effectively in different dimensions, opens up another element of ambiguity in classifying Freire's work: it soon becomes apparent that her work can occupy a spectrum of solutions ranging from small scale pieces, suitable for decorating domestic spaces, to public sculptures for urban landscapes – which, though never experimented with, emerges as the inevitable

corollary of the exercises described above. This possibility of dealing with different dimensions based on a coherence of forms and scales exists in potential only – it is not deliberately explored by the artist as a means for aiding speed and repetition. Freire does not use this possibility as a process to facilitate creation/reproduction: she does not use the formula for either “series” or mass production. Rather, the artist follows an individualised and very slow process of refining the final forms, gradually removing anything extraneous, based on successive attempts to find a definitive solution for each piece which she regards as unrepeatable.

Freire’s artworks define open yet evident spaces; and they construe themselves as examples of clarity and emptiness. Clarity does not originate in simplicity, because many of the sculptural figures presented require thorough decoding, obliging us to roam their lines until we realise where they are taking us and what the subtle differences are that separate one from the other. The use of colour performs an important role in individualising each sculpture from the others and from the surrounding space. The clarity mentioned originates from the fact that this figure (the lines that structure its forms) allows the light and the wandering observer’s gaze to roam and penetrate – each sculpture is a free figure in space, in rotation; and it is impossible to name given the inability to find a recognisable geometric classification for each set of edges.

Thus, the place defined by each piece and by the set of pieces exhibited (which the artist wishes to call “Imaginatio Locorum”, a poem by Ruy Belo from the book *O Problema da Habitação* [the problem of housing]) is an imaginary (or imagined) place. The artist refers to it as “a non-functional yet material place which (I suppose) never fully abandons its original link to the imagination”. In other words, Freire creates a sculpture park, on a human scale, with paths and circuits. And this set affirms itself, simultaneously, as a whole and as “nowhere”: the colourful mouldings define a physical void, a “space between things”, and this open sculpture space is filled with a pair of concepts/sentiments (freedom and/or distress) that correspond to each other here and warn us of the instability of the reality that surrounds us.

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